

What we claim is:

1. An apparatus for handwriting recognition, the  
5 apparatus comprising:
  - a touch-sensitive display screen providing a  
handwriting input area capable of detecting a handwritten  
user input; and
  - a processing device configured to interpret the  
10 handwritten user input as a symbol from a plurality of  
predefined symbols,
    - wherein the handwriting input area includes a  
writing start area,
    - wherein the processing device is configured to  
15 provide a visual indication of said writing start area on  
said display screen, and
    - wherein the processing device is configured to  
interpret the user input as a symbol only if the user  
input starts within said writing start area.
- 20 2. An apparatus as in claim 1, the apparatus having  
a user interface in which the display screen is included,  
wherein the processing device is configured to interpret  
the user input as a user interface control operation and  
25 not as a symbol if the user input starts outside of said  
writing start area.
3. An apparatus as in claim 2, wherein the  
processing device is further configured to interpret the  
30 user input as a user interface control operation and not  
as a symbol if a pen down event within said writing start  
area is not followed by a pen move event within a  
prescribed time period.
- 35 4. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said writing  
start area is considerably smaller than and has a fixed  
location within said handwriting input area.

5. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said writing start area is considerably smaller than and has an adaptive location within said handwriting input area.

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6. An apparatus as in claim 5, wherein said processing device is configured to adjust said adaptive location depending on a current cursor position.

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7. An apparatus as in claim 5, wherein said adaptive location is adjustable by a user of the apparatus.

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8. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said handwriting input area is formed by a majority of the display screen's available presentation area.

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9. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said handwriting input area is formed by essentially the entire display screen's available presentation area.

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10. An apparatus as in claim 1, said user input including at least one pen stroke, wherein said processing device is configured to display, on said display screen, a graphical trace representing said at least one pen stroke prior to the interpretation thereof.

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11. An apparatus as in claim 10, wherein said processing device is configured to display, on said display screen, said symbol when it has been interpreted from said at least one pen stroke.

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12. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said plurality of predefined symbols includes a symbol set selected from the group consisting of: Latin characters, upper case characters, lower case characters, Arabic numerals, punctuation symbols, Cyrillic characters, Chinese characters, Japanese Kanji symbols, Japanese

Hiragana characters and Japanese Katakana characters, and user-defined symbols.

13. An apparatus as in claim 1, said plurality of  
5 predefined symbols including a first symbol set and a second symbol set, and said writing start area comprising a first subarea and a second subarea, wherein said processing device is configured to interpret the user  
10 input as a symbol from said first symbol set if the user input starts within said first subarea, and as a symbol from said second symbol set if the user input starts within said second subarea.

14. An apparatus as in claim 13, said plurality of  
15 predefined symbols further comprising a third symbol set, and said writing start area further comprising a third subarea, wherein said processing device is configured to interpret the user input as a symbol from said third  
20 symbol set if the user input starts within said third subarea.

15. An apparatus as in claim 1, in the form of a mobile terminal for a mobile telecommunications system.

25 16. An apparatus as in claim 1, in the form of a portable/personal digital assistant (PDA).

17. A method for handwriting recognition in an apparatus that has a touch-sensitive display screen with  
30 a handwriting input area capable of detecting a handwritten user input, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a writing start area within said handwriting input area;

35 visually indicating said writing start area on said display screen;

detecting a handwritten user input; and

interpreting the user input as a symbol from a plurality of predefined symbols only if the user input starts within said writing start area.

5        18. A method as in claim 17, wherein, instead of said step of interpreting the user input as a symbol, the user input is interpreted as a user interface control operation and not as a symbol if the user input starts outside of said writing start area.

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19. A method as in claim 18, wherein the user input is further interpreted as a user interface control operation and not as a symbol if a pen down event within said writing start area is not followed by a pen move event within a prescribed time period.

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20. A method as in claim 17, comprising the further step of adapting a location of said writing start area within said handwriting input area depending on a current cursor position.

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21. A method as in claim 17, said user input including at least one pen stroke, the method comprising the further step of displaying, on said display screen, a graphical trace representing said at least one pen stroke prior to the interpretation thereof.

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22. A method as in claim 21, comprising the further step of displaying, on said display screen, said symbol when it has been interpreted from said at least one pen stroke.

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23. A method as in claim 17, wherein said plurality of predefined symbols includes a symbol set selected from the group consisting of: Latin characters, upper case characters, lower case characters, Arabic numerals, punctuation symbols, Cyrillic characters, Chinese

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characters, Japanese Kanji symbols, Japanese Hiragana characters and Japanese Katakana characters, and user-defined symbols.

5           24. A method as in claim 17, said plurality of pre-defined symbols including a first symbol set and a second symbol set, and said writing start area comprising a first subarea and a second subarea, the method comprising the further step of interpreting the user input as a  
10 symbol from said first symbol set if the user input starts within said first subarea, and as a symbol from said second symbol set if the user input starts within said second subarea.

15           25. A method as in claim 24, said plurality of predefined symbols further comprising a third symbol set, and said writing start area further comprising a third subarea, the method comprising the further step of  
20 interpreting the user input as a symbol from said third symbol set if the user input starts within said third subarea.